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Catskill Conservation Corps Trains New Trail Maintainers

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Contact: Heather Rolland, Assistant Catskill Program Coordinator
hrolland@nynjtc.org; 518-628-4243

On Saturday, June 20, a star-studded cast of characters taught and learned side by side on the scenic trails of the Southern Escarpment. NYS DEC Ranger Rob Dawson joined the Trail Conference's Catskill Program staff to teach Introduction to Trail Maintenance on the trails. Hands on learning at its finest, volunteers assessed blowdowns and used a variety of tools to remove them, cleared water bars and learned about their construction, and clipped encroaching branches. In total, approximately 3 miles of popular trails were fully addressed -- and the crew enjoyed some killer views as well. Two hardworking Student Conservation Association interns, Calvin Murphy and Louis DiLorenzo, helped out and learned alongside our volunteers.

In addition to learning technical and tool-handling skills, the volunteers practiced decision-making skills, with a sharp focus on safety in the backcountry. Instructors provided hands on opportunities for each participant to use each tool, and pros and cons of the various tools were discussed. The instructors knew they had been successful in providing a comprehensive and fun course when at the close of the day the volunteers requested being connected with existing trail crews to continue to hone their skills!

Trail maintainers are a key component of the volunteer workforce that assist DEC staff in maintaining the trails on State lands throughout the Catskill Mountains region. A wide variety of opportunities to gain additional training or to become a volunteer trail maintainer are available from the New York New Jersey Trail Conference. To discover additional learning opportunities or to become a volunteer trail maintainer, contact Doug Senterman, Catskills Program Coordinator, at catskills@nynjtc.org or 518-628-4243.

The Catskill Conservation Corps is a partnership between the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, whose volunteers maintain a network of more than 2,100 miles of trails, including more than 200 miles in the Catskills. The Catskill Conservation Corps aims to increase and support volunteer contributions on projects that protect natural resources and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities in the Catskill Mountains. Look for upcoming events, including litter pick-ups, lean to maintenance, and more, scheduled throughout the summer of 2015, around the Catskill Mountains region! All Catskill Conservation Corps events are open to the public.

Keep up with news, events, workshops, and volunteer opportunities in the Catskill region at CatskillConservationCorps.org and nynjtc.org/catskills. To volunteer with the Catskill Conservation Corps, fill out our interest form at CatskillConservationCorps.org/volunteer.